

B.J. Wagner*Senior Director of Smart Justice*

B. J. Wagner, MS, joined the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute in the Fall of 2015. In her role with MMHPI she will lead the Policy Institute's Smart Justice work assisting communities across Texas transform systems to increase prevention and intervention services and reduce justice involvement for special populations.

B. J. began her career in law enforcement as a county jailer and later as a law enforcement officer in North East and Western Texas. In response to the increasing number of contacts with persons with mental illness she experienced as a law enforcement officer she chose to return to graduate school and completed studies in clinical neuropsychology and counseling psychology at Texas A&M and began working in community mental health clinics. She continued consulting with the field of law enforcement on best practices as she provided services to clientele through local mental health authorities. B. J. has developed curriculum for disciplines across the criminal justice system on mental health awareness, symptom recognition and verbal de-escalation techniques.

B.J. worked for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) where she developed front end diversion and continuity of care systems for offenders with special care needs and guided Medicaid implementation for limited populations within the State's prison systems. While at TDCJ, B.J. worked closely with the Department of State Health Services to redesign the TRAG assessment to include criminogenic risk factors to ensure all persons being assessed in the public mental health system also had criminogenic needs addressed. In 2015, after serving as Deputy Director for the Reentry and Integration Division at TDCJ, B. J. joined the Texas Veterans Commission during the regular legislative session. She worked closely with governmental relations analyzing proposed legislation and advising on emerging trends and state and local initiatives to address the needs of trauma affected veterans at risk of justice involvement.

B.J. received recognition from the Texas Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council for contributions to elevating awareness of prevention and care needs for Texans living with brain injury. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Qualitative Criminology at the University of Texas at Dallas.